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Our Readers' Views

Further Opinion On Vietnam Policy

Editor, News-Press: It is a tragedy of the first order to watch a man (Sidney Hook—Sunday, March 20, letters), who writes books in lucid logical fashion, pursuing the patently propagandist view that we will not interfere with the will of the people of other nations to choose their own leaders. I have read several of Professor Hook's books and felt them refreshingly rational.

Recent history indicates that we believe in self-determination only when it goes our way. On this point our hands are dirty! Did we oppose Diem when he abrogated the results of free elections? I don't mean just the fact that he refused to hold the famous 1954 elections; but that he literally voided elections when the results didn't suit him. Did we invade the Dominican Republic when the military junta overthrew the freely elected Bosch? How about the many times the military of South America voided elections which elected (freely!) leftists? What sense does the argument "no communist regime (national) has ever come to power in a free election" make when every time any government which even closely resembles communism is elected we either acquiesce, or if the stories about the CIA are true, deliberately foment the abrogation of the results of the free elections? It is surprising to see Professor Hook resorting to this form of pompous, but empty, self-righteousness.

On the other hand, we moved quickly to assure that the supporters of the freely elected Bosch would not overthrow the military junta! What is even more distressing, we provide the military aid which allows the military to prevent the will of the people being served! In further evidence that we only believe in self-determination when it goes our way, no less a person than Eisenhower himself suggests that the 1954 elections would have been won by the communists in Vietnam. No wonder we didn't allow them!

Tragically we have acted in ways contrary to our ideal of democratic self-determination! The only thing that we can hope to prove in Vietnam is that Mao's wars of liberation will not be tolerated. If we want to change our ways and act consonant to our ideals, we had better seriously work for an independent pacification force in Vietnam and accept the will of the people! I see no evidence to indicate that we are doing so.

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